



Department
of Health &
Social Care



Department
for Education

10th March 2026

Professor Peck

Send via email to: chair@officeforstudents.org.uk

Dear Professor Peck,

The 10 Year Health Plan for England, published on 2 July 2025, sets out the Government's ambition to transform the NHS dental system. We are taking urgent action to rebuild NHS dentistry in the short term and laying the foundations to make it fit for the future. The Government is committed to achieving fundamental reform by the end of this Parliament, with a focus on matching resources to need, improving access, promoting prevention and rewarding dentists fairly.

Expanding the dental workforce is crucial to our ambition and will mean more NHS dentists, more NHS appointments and better oral health. As announced in our 10 Year Health Plan, we will make it a requirement for newly qualified dentists to practice in the NHS for a minimum period. Our intention is that this requirement will apply to individuals entering a dental course of study from academic year (AY) 2027/28. We will consult on the details of this requirement in due course.

This guidance relates to the expansion of dental training places in AY 2027/28. We are providing sufficient additional funding to enable the Office for Students (OfS) to increase the maximum fundable limits for home students by a further 50 places in AY 2027/28.

We ask that expansion is focused on new dental schools approved by the General Dental Council (GDC), but which are currently without maximum fundable limits (i.e., do not currently receive Government funding for places). This means that we do not expect the OfS to use the additional funding Government is providing to increase maximum fundable limits for all dental schools in AY 2027/28.

We are asking the OfS to facilitate this to ensure the new dental schools obtain a sufficient initial cohort of home fee students and to align this expansion to local NHS workforce need, with an emphasis on priority geographical areas, with due regard to NHS workforce

requirements and supplementary advice set out by NHS England (NHSE) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Dental schools should only be allocated additional places if there is confidence that placement and educator capacity is in place, informed by advice from the GDC and NHSE of provider readiness and clinical placement capacity respectively. The OfS should have confidence that sufficiently robust and ambitious criteria on widening access and participation are demonstrated by dental schools bidding for places. Whilst priority should be given to new dental schools, it is also important to recall that some regions, such as the South West, are severely underserved in terms of NHS dentistry.

The additional funding needed to cover the full costs to the OfS for funding these additional dental students will be reflected within the applicable Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) allocations. We would expect the allocation of the additional 50 places for AY 2027/28 to be carried over into the intakes of the schools in question for subsequent years.

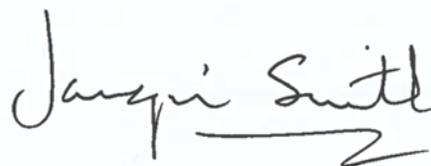
We ask the OfS to engage with the Department for Education (DfE) and DHSC, as well as NHSE and the GDC as appropriate, as it makes decisions about how to use this funding. The operation of maximum fundable limits for dental courses should continue to be managed closely by the OfS, so that dental school places remain within their fundable limits.

This letter provides further guidance to the OfS under section 2(3) of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, and this guidance does not supersede steers in any previous guidance.

Yours sincerely,



The Hon Stephen Kinnock MP
Minister of State for Care



The Rt Hon Baroness Smith
Minister of State for Skills